

**Testimony of Sharona Cowan, Director of Mandated Services
City of Stamford Department of Health & Social Services
Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing
March 2, 2016
Bill Number NO. 245**

An Act Concerning municipal recovery of moneys paid on behalf of displaced tenants

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebimbas and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony to address and support Bill #245

As the relocation officer for the City of Stamford, I have worked with over 168 households (families and individuals) displaced due to the code enforcement from unsafe and substandard housing with relocation services. These services include temporary housing, assistance with locating and securing permanent housing and help with moving expenses.

These displacements have a significant impact on city budgets due to the unpredictability and challenges of permanently rehousing people who have limited income to afford housing in lower Fairfield County. While the goal is to move tenants into permanent housing as soon as possible, factors such as housing discrimination, lack of available affordable housing, immigrants who are not legally present, poor credit ratings, landlords who do not want the City to inspect their rental properties, and long waitlist for shelter placement make it challenging and often result in longer stays in temporary housing. Temporary housing often comes in the form of hotels, which as you can image could be very expensive.

Between 2010-2015, Stamford has spent over \$400,000 on relocation services of which roughly \$320,000 was related to emergency housing. Landlord reimbursement rate is about 30%. The law currently gives cities the ability to lien to recouped payment; I strongly support the revision of section 8-270a allowing cities the ability to seek civil actions against landlords who fail to repay and it gives landlords better clarity of what their obligation is under the uniform relocation assistance act (URAA) particularly with regard to reimbursing cities for emergency housing cost. While, I cannot speak for other towns and cities, I do know that my counterparts in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport have the similar concerns and issue with reimbursement.

Additionally, I would encourage further review of other sections of the law and its impact on Cities. Thank you for your attention to this important issue and your commitment to the tax payers of the State of Connecticut.

Respectfully,
Sharona Cowan